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**STATEMENT ON THE ZIMABAWE ELECTORAL PROCESS
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Johannesburg, South Africa**

Saturday and Sunday and part of Monday, the world watched in hopeful admiration the courage and determination of millions of Zimbabweans who sought to exercise their most basic freedom – the right to embrace democratic change and seek a future with hope. Zimbabwe's presidential elections of March 9-11 were fundamentally flawed.

The electoral process, from start to finish, ignored the norms and standards which govern elections throughout the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and to which Zimbabwe had committed. Supreme Court rulings were cast aside, the Constitution was flaunted, the independent media was persecuted, civil society was marginalized, and the will of the people was the chief casualty.

The number of polling stations was drastically reduced and resulted in thousands of Zimbabwean being disenfranchised. In numerous areas of the country, there were no independent monitors in polling stations and watching the storage and transportation of ballot boxes.

In fact, in reviewing SADC guidelines and norms, it appears only one was met: the timely announcement of the election dates.

The electoral process did not:

- allow unimpeded freedom to campaign throughout the country;
- allow free and unimpeded access to Voters' Rolls;
- insure that all Government Security Forces acted impartially and professionally;
- provide reasonable safeguards at political meetings, rallies, polling stations and party premises; and
- provide equal and free access to the state-owned media.

These failed elections are a tragedy for the people of Zimbabwe, but the worst may still be ahead. Zimbabwe and the region cannot return to business as usual. Zimbabwe's rapidly shrinking economy will continue to have far-reaching effects.

The United States stands with the people of Zimbabwe as well as the people and governments of southern Africa in the face of these challenges.

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